

# A Story of Compassion

## USDA Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

### Crossroads Community Services

Dallas, Texas

Elizabeth Louis, a Crossroads Community Services (CCS) client and mother of five, knows too well the benefits of USDA food assistance programs. She's a former WIC client and food stamp recipient.

"After I finish a job training program to better myself and family, I still needed a little help with my food expenses. ...That's when I came to CCS to lend a helping hand to ease my grocery bill. I like the nutritional items my family receives and it's a great supplement for planning my family meals. I recommend this agency to all the people I know who may need help," she said.



Maria Alicia Puente, another CCS client, receives her monthly commodities for her family of seven. "We appreciate all the foods my family gets. It helps a lot! Most of the foods I get I would be able to purchase at the store, like the canned fruits and juices," Ms. Puente said.

### How the Initiative is Helping

"We are so grateful for the USDA commodity program which allows families to get a variety of nutritious foods needed in the crossroads of their lives," said Rev. Cole. Through many USDA Faith-Based and Community Initiative outreach campaigns in Dallas, more and more of

this community is finding out about the benefits available to them through the government's nutrition assistance programs. The TEFAP at CCS has grown considerably, in large part, as a result USDA FBCI outreach campaigns.



### About the Organization

Reverend Jay Cole is no stranger when it comes to helping people. After giving up his job as a computer specialist six years ago, he followed his life-long passion to become a minister and to help people who are less fortunate. Rev. Cole is the director of Crossroads Community Service (CCS), urban outreach ministry of First United Methodist Church in Dallas, Texas



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CCS provides assistance to a low income and homeless people in the city of Dallas. Crossroads operates a clothing closet and a food pantry, as well as affiliated with the “Stewpot” which provides hot meals for the homeless. Last year, CCS distributed over 90,000 articles of clothing and over 580,000 pounds of food to families and individuals living in the city of Dallas. CCS became the 4th largest distributor of food for the North Texas Food Bank. USDA commodities, through TEFAP, The Emergency Food Assistance Program, are distributed to low-income households in the Dallas area through the Food Pantry.

“I believe that the foods we received from USDA, along with other foods provided by the North Texas Food Bank, really helps our clients keep their homes,” said Rev. Cole.



CCS works with the homeless population in downtown Dallas and also with a growing Hispanic population. This program focuses on homelessness prevention (provide enough food so families can use their dollars to pay rent, electricity, etc.). “We’re giving monthly an average of 43 pounds of USDA

commodities per adult in a household which equals \$60 of groceries.”

For a family, the money saved from purchasing groceries, can be used to pay for the utilities, rent or other household needs.

“In 2000, we started the ‘official’ food pantry at church in a closet behind the choir room. This area was only 380 sq. ft. where we distributed over 33,000 pounds of food. Now, our new facility is approximately 6,500 sq. ft. with a distribution of 580,000 pounds of food to needy clients in Dallas.

CCS clients share their feelings about the food assistance received on surveys given to clients. The first question is about the amount and variety of foods received. All client responses indicated that the food packages were great!! One client interviewed loved the canned meats, fruits and trail mix.

Crossroads Community Services receive approximately 560 households for the Food Pantry each month. “I wouldn’t trade my job for world—helping people is my soul purpose,” said Rev. Cole.

